Indiana Department of Education
SUPPORTING STUDENT SUCCESS

Summary of Indiana's Assessment Policy for Adult Education Programs

Approved assessments
- Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE), versions 7-8 (programs need to discontinue the use of this form no later than June 30, 2010) and 9-10
- Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS)
- WorkKeys

ABE learners must be assessed using TABE, CASAS, or WorkKeys.

ESL learners <u>must</u> be assessed using CASAS.

A TABE Locator or CASAS Appraisal must be administered following test publisher guidelines.

A pretest must be administered by enrollment following test publisher guidelines.
- Placement in an educational functioning level must follow National Reporting System (NRS) guidelines.
- The lowest functioning level should be used for initial placement.

A pretest and posttest with different but equivalent forms of the same instrument must be used.

A posttest must be administered following test publisher guidelines.
- The minimum number of instructional hours for a posttest is 60 hours (using an alternate form) for TABE and 40 hours is the minimum for CASAS. A posttest for WorkKeys may be administered after a semester or quarter course.

Exception for ASE Low and ASE High: If a learner indicates that he/she is leaving the program, but has less than the minimum requirements according to test publisher guidelines, the student may be administered a posttest if the teacher can show evidence of the student mastering the required skills through other documentation. Teachers must have an administrator's approval to test outside the publishers' guidelines and this needs to be documented in the student's file**.**

An "advance" or "completion" is recorded if, according to a subsequent assessment, the student has skills corresponding to one or more levels higher than the incoming level in the area(s) used for placement.

Indiana's Assessment Policy for Adult Education Programs

The **National Reporting System** (NRS) is an accountability system for state-administered adult education programs under the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, Title II of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA – P. L.105-220).

The NRS system includes student measures and definitions to assess the (1) impact of adult education instruction, (2) methodologies for data collection, and (3) standards for collecting and reporting data. It allows states the flexibility to formulate assessment policies and identify training to ensure student educational levels are reported consistently and reliably across programs.

Educational functioning levels describe a set of skills that a student can do in the areas of reading, writing, numeracy, speaking, listening, and in the workplace. The NRS requires that standardized assessments be used for placement and reporting educational gains.

Students should set other goals, including employment, high school completion, and further education, under the NRS. See www.nrsweb.org for guidance.

Formal Assessment Process

Educational gain provides a measure of literacy gains resulting from instruction, and applies to all students enrolled in the program. Assessment includes a screening instrument, a standardized pretest to determine educational functioning level, and a posttest to measure gain from instruction.

The initial test is a locator or appraisal test, and since there is no alternative form of these instruments, the assessment cannot be used to determine placement or educational gain.

Shortly after entering the program or by enrollment (12 hours), a student is administered a pretest to determine an initial educational functioning level for the program year. The program decides the skill areas to assess based on the student's instructional needs and goals.

While the program is encouraged to assess multiple skills areas, NRS policy requires the local program to place the student according to the lowest level unless the learner has indicated a desire to study in an area where a higher score

was achieved. Students must be assessed in reading, writing, and/or math.

A posttest is required after a predetermined number of instructional hours on an opposite form of the same test that determined the initial educational level. While it is expected that all students will be administered a posttest, a minimum of 50 percent of students must be given a posttest. A student may be retested after additional instruction.

Informal Assessment Process

Assessing the progress and skills of learners is a continuous process, starting from the moment they arrive in the office or classroom and continuing until they leave the program.

Informal instructional-based assessments may include chapter tests, writing samples, and teacher-developed tests.

Assessment is a tool to measure student progress and instruction over time.

> Learners and programs are better informed about basic skill levels.
> Learners and programs can identify short- and long-term goals.
> Instruction focuses on learners' needs instead of relying on pre-determined curricula.
> Learners and programs can identify other factors such as childcare and transportation that may affect progress.
> Programs can determine effectiveness of program design, instructors' proficiency, and curricula.
> Programs can have more accurate data to make decisions.

NRS guidelines must be followed to determine educational functioning level and educational gain.

Training is available through the adult education professional development project and dates are posted on the Web.

Standardization, validity, and reliability are terms used within assessment to ensure quality data. In testing, standardization refers to measurements

or assessments conducted under exact, specified, and repeatable conditions. Assessment validity means the test instrument is relevant for which it is intended. Test reliability is based on the extent to which a test yields the same results on repeated trials.

Indiana is required to negotiate and set performance goals with the U.S. Department of Education in 11 educational functioning areas.

Performance goals are also set with local programs and funding is tied to meeting these goals. Performance awards are made based on accurate performance data submitted by local programs.

The implementation of an assessment policy in a consistent manner throughout the state is essential. Quality data is crucial to ensure a "level playing field" among individual local programs and states.

Eligible Adults Defined

Learners who meet the criteria of an "eligible adult" must be assessed. An eligible adult is:

> At least 16 years of age;
> Officially withdrawn from a K-12 program;
> Does not have a high school diploma; or is
> A high school graduate who needs basic skill development in English, language arts, or mathematics at or below the high school level.

The majority of students can be tested; however, exceptions may be made for students who are unable to respond due to low literacy or English proficiency or disabilities.

However, programs must provide an alternative assessment for these students and the reason for the exception must be documented in the student folder. Educational gains cannot be counted for students with low literacy or disabilities unless one of the approved standardized tests is used.

Approved Assessments

All adult basic education programs are required to use one of three approved standardized tests.

1. The **Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS)** assesses reading, math, and listening skill levels. The primary focus of instruction for ABE/ASE learners should be in the areas of reading, writing, and/or math, and for ESL learners speaking/listening, reading, and/or writing.

2. The **Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE)** focus on prose, document, and quantitative literacy. Together, these cover reading, mathematics computation, applied mathematics, and language.

They are supported by optional vocabulary, language mechanics, and spelling tests. Only ABE/ASE learners are assessed with TABE.

Only **TABE versions 7-8** and **9-10** may be administered, and **CASAS must be used with ESL learners.** (TABE 7-8 is being phased out and will not be a valid assessment for reporting educational gain after June 30, 2010.)

3. **WorkKeys** measures "real world" skills that employers consider to be critical to job success. WorkKeys allows educators, individuals, and employers to identify gaps and guide training decisions to improve current and prospective employee skills when necessary. Only ABE/ASE learners are assessed with WorkKeys.

Adults may be assessed using applied technology, applied mathematics, business writing, listening, writing, locating information, observation, reading for information, teamwork, and work readiness.

A full testing battery must be used except when a student has been assessed within the last 90 days by a referral agency using an approved Indiana Department of Education assessment instrument or is interested in only one area of improvement.

These policies apply to **workplace programs**.

> A locator must be administered following test publisher guidelines.
> To determine educational gain, parallel forms must be administered.

A pretest and posttest must be completed with TABE 7-8 or 9-10 only. Consistent testing protocols, including adherence to publisher time

limits, must be followed to ensure a standardized testing format. The testing protocol that accompanies the assessment must ensure that results accurately reflect students' educational levels and educational gains.

A pretest must be administered by enrollment and follow test publisher guidelines.

Placement in an educational functioning level must follow NRS guidelines. The lowest functioning level should be used for initial placement if the learner is at different levels.

Students who leave the program for more than 90 days must be administered a pretest again. Posttest scores from the previous year may be used for enrollment in the current year if they are not more than 90 days old.

Significant educational gains are not likely to occur in less than 60 hours. A posttest must be administered following test publisher guidelines. **The minimum number of instructional hours for a posttest is 60 for TABE and 40 hours is the minimum for CASAS. A posttest for WorkKeys may be administered after a semester or quarter course.** Exception for ASE Low and ASE High: If a learner indicates that he/she is leaving the program, but has less than the minimum requirements according to test publisher guidelines, the student may be administered a posttest if the teacher can show evidence of the student mastering the required skills through other documentation. Teachers must have an administrator's approval to test outside the publishers' guidelines and this needs to be documented in the student's file**.**

An **"advance"** or **"completion"** is recorded if, according to a subsequent assessment, the student has skills corresponding to one or more levels higher than the incoming level in the area(s) used for placement.

The **lowest functioning level** should again be used to make this determination.

Local programs must use data for evaluation and to promote improvement.

Attendance must be entered by **day or week on a weekly basis** into i-STAR.

Testing should be entered into i-STAR **within one month** of administration.

A high school/GED diploma may be used as a measure of student progress *only* for ASE high students. Tests must be kept in a secure environment and administered in an area that provides adequate space, appropriate furniture, and good lighting. Programs must ensure:

Learners are informed of the reason for the assessment and how test results will be used.

Learners are confidentially informed of test results and implications.

A sufficient amount of instruction has been provided between a pretest and posttest.

The appropriate pretest and posttest is administered, checking previous testing records to determine that the correct level and form of the test has been selected.

The test is administered in an appropriate testing environment following the standardized testing protocol.

The test is accurately scored, checked for validity, and reported for NRS purposes.

While instructional-based assessments cannot be used to report gains in basic skills, they may assist in instructional design and delivery. Formal and informal assessments such as diagnostic assessment, teacher-designed materials, and student portfolios may be used to measure aptitude, identify learning disabilities and learning styles, and career exploration.

Testing Accommodations

The accountability standards in the Workforce Investment Act include the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998. The purpose is to improve access to adult education programs and achieve employment outcomes for learners with disabilities. Section 504 in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 have provisions related to reasonable testing accommodations for learners with disabilities. Reasonable accommodations provide an opportunity for students to demonstrate their skills. Accommodations may alter test procedures without changing what the test is intended to measure. The following paragraphs include information on the rights and responsibilities of local programs when serving learners with

disabilities, and the rights and responsibilities of learners with disabilities. Guidelines are provided for administering standardized assessments using accommodations for learners with documented disabilities. The suggested accommodations for the disability categories include accommodations in test administration procedures and use of appropriate test forms.

Fulfilling learner requests for accommodations is the responsibility of the local program. Test administrators must consider the learner's individual needs when accommodations are provided. Programs are responsible for providing accessible services and must ensure that these services meet reasonable criteria. The program administering the test must provide any necessary accommodations at no cost to the learner.

Costs are negligible for most of the common accommodations that learners will request. Adult learners with disabilities are responsible for providing information and documentation of their disability. Documentation should be within the last five years and may include a medical doctor's report, a diagnostic assessment report from a certified professional, Individualized Education Program (IEPs) records from learners previously served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), or a report from Vocational Rehabilitation (or other service provider). If a learner discloses a disability, the adult education program must ensure:

A staff member reviews the documentation of the disability with the learner to identify the impact of the disability on the learner's previous educational efforts and on the learner's short- and long-term goals.
The staff member and the learner compile a history on the learner's use of accommodations and the learner's perception of the effectiveness of the accommodations previously used. The staff assists the learner in identifying accommodations that may be appropriate.
If the program and learner identify an accommodation that the learner has not used previously, the program provides the learner with instruction on its use and opportunities to practice using the accommodation in a non-threatening environment before using it during testing.
A staff member provides counseling with the learner about his or her progress in the program and the effectiveness of the accommodations. Revisions are made if necessary.
Learner test scores, test forms, and testing are entered. Information about accommodations provided to learners with disabilities must be maintained in the learner's permanent files.

Educational Functioning Levels	TABE Grade Level	CASAS Score	WorkKeys
ABE Beginning Literacy	0 – 1.9	200 or less	
ABE Beginning Basic Education	2 – 3.9	201-210	
ABE Intermediate Low	4 – 5.9	211-220	
ABE Intermediate High	6 – 8.9	221-235	Reading for Information: 75-78
			Writing: 75-77
			Applied Math: 75-77
ESL Beginning Literacy	0 – 0.9	180 or below	
ESL Low Beginning	1 – 1.9	181-190	
ESL High Beginning	2 – 3.9	191-200	
ESL Low Intermediate	4 – 5.9	201-210	
ESL High Intermediate	6 – 8.9	211-220	
ESL Advanced	9 – 10.0	221-235	
Note: Grade levels based on CASAS reading		Exit Criteria 236 or above	
ASE Low (ASC & GED)	9 – 10.9	236-245	Reading for Information: 79-81
			Writing: 78-85
			Applied Math: 78-81
ASE High (ASC & GED)	11 – 12.9	246+	Reading for Information: 82-90
			Writing: 86-90
			Applied Math: 82-90

Assessment Training

Individuals who administer any federal and state-approved assessment tool must have successfully completed training on its use.

Training will be delivered by individuals who have been certified by the test publisher or who have received advanced training on the assessment instrument.

Program directors are responsible for verifying that individuals administering assessments have received the required training. Documentation of the training will be retained by the Office of Adult Education.

Documentation of training includes the assessment instrument, training date, training location, facilitator, participant names, and respective programs.

Assessment for All is a comprehensive training initiative for assessment tools currently approved by the U.S. Department of Education and the Indiana Department of Education.

Training in testing protocols for TABE, CASAS, and WorkKeys are conducted in the context of the state assessment policy.

Assessment for All training emphasizes proper test administration and scoring, definitions of measures, and how to use test results to guide instruction for the purpose of improving learner outcomes. NRS policy, accountability, and data collection are included in all training components.

Training Schedule

Assessment policy guidelines serve as a backdrop for all training to ensure program compliance and reliable results for NRS reporting.

Specific training activities include:

> An online pre-service module based on assessment practices and policy
> An assessment component in new teacher workshops
> A TABE online training module
> In-service TABE workshops for programs
> A CASAS Implementation state workshop
> A CASAS Beyond Implementation state workshop
> A WorkKeys training in partnership with local workforce development offices

Veteran staff members receive refresher training as recommended in test publisher guidelines.

Related Training

Training on gathering, analyzing, compiling, and reporting data for the NRS is delivered to staff through regularly scheduled state workshops and local in-service presentations. Additional technical assistance is provided upon request.

Purchasing Assessment Instruments

Programs must purchase assessment instruments sufficient to meet program requirements.

Notifying Programs of Assessment Changes

Guidance is provided to ensure that programs are in compliance with allowable instruments based on federal and state requirements. When there are changes in assessments, every effort will be made to assist programs in making that change.

Monitoring Adherence to Procedures

Regular desk reviews and site visits by state staff will be conducted to monitor data and verify that correct procedures have been followed.